

**The Behrend College Collegian**

published weekly by the students of Penn State Erie, The Behrend College

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**Letter Policy:** The Collegian encourages letters to the editor on news coverage, editorial content and University affairs. Letters should be no longer than 400 words. Letters should include the address, phone number, semester standing and major of the writer. Writers can mail their letters to behrcoll2@aol.com.

EDITORIAL

**The importance of SRTEs**

As the semester comes to a close, student evaluations (SRTE'S) are being passed out in all classes. Most students seem to take these lightly, the common feeling being that they don't matter. On the contrary, these evaluations are looked at carefully and used to determine the future of a professor's career.

SRTE's are one of the most direct ways that a student has influence over the future of her or his school. The evaluations are anonymous, and are not seen by the professor until after the final grades are turned in. This is a student's chance to let the professor know their thoughts about how the exams are structured, or what she or he thinks about how the

final grade is determined. This is also a chance to let the administration know if you had a particularly good or bad professor.

If there was ever a chance for individual voices to be heard in the midst of the huge bureaucracy that is Penn State, this is it. These evaluations have truly affected the salaries and employment of Behrend professors.

As students begin to get nervous for the finals that professors will give, take these evaluations seriously enough to make professors nervous as well. This is an important chance to affect the quality of instruction at Behrend.

**Barbie goes under the knife for a more natural bustline**

By Charles Powell  
Kentucky Kernel  
University of Kentucky

So Mattel Toys goes back to the drawing board with Barbie the most belovedly controversial doll in U.S. history.

America's favorite air head will get a new look that may be rolled out early next year and some would say even that speedy schedule is long overdue. But can the changes in store really do enough to make Barbie real?

The main complaint about Barbie has always been her physical traits. This is fair: the doll packs a chest like two beluga whales penned in unnaturally close quarters. Add to that a candy-thin waist, perennially steeped feet, and hips that resemble two miniature poodles fighting under a blanket and you've pretty much got her pegged.

Men have long defended their creepy fetishization of Barbie by pointing out that few male dolls are physically realistic either and that is also true: None of my friends has a kung-fu grip either. But to get the Barbie effect G.I. Joe would have to carry a bulging package that hung to his knees as standard equipment. Would kind of make it hard to fight, huh?

That's the problem with Barbie. A figure like a balloon clasped in the middle makes it difficult for her to accomplish her mission, which is giving little girls a positive role model. A woman who totters like an in-patient at an ancient Chinese foot-binding clinic may garner huge amounts of lust, but very little respect.

This hasn't been helped by the lack of useful accouterments that have been appended to Barbie in her career. The Barbie that burbled, "Math is hard!" a few years back isn't the only image that seems predestined to doom small girls to a life of subservi-

ence.

Barbie has periodically had her own comic book, one issue of which contained overcoming incredible hardship. Was it about breaking the glass ceiling at work, getting Skipper away from an abusive boyfriend or fighting the chemical company that was polluting her ground water?

It's none of the three of course. Barbie's success was getting through work, a lunch meeting and a dinner date with Ken by using her only clean sash as a headband, scarf and belt at different occasions. Barbie's superpower is the ability to accessorize.

Barbie's permanent fluffdom has been defended by the toy maker for years. "She's primarily a fashion

doll," quoth Mattel's public relations jockeys, meaning it is irrational to ask more from her.

But just as clothes don't make the man they don't make the woman (or, in this case, the doll) either; a look at Barbie sans ensembles shows a garish body, a blank stare and precious little in the way of self-determination. If she were real she'd either be a trophy wife, unemployed or attending college.

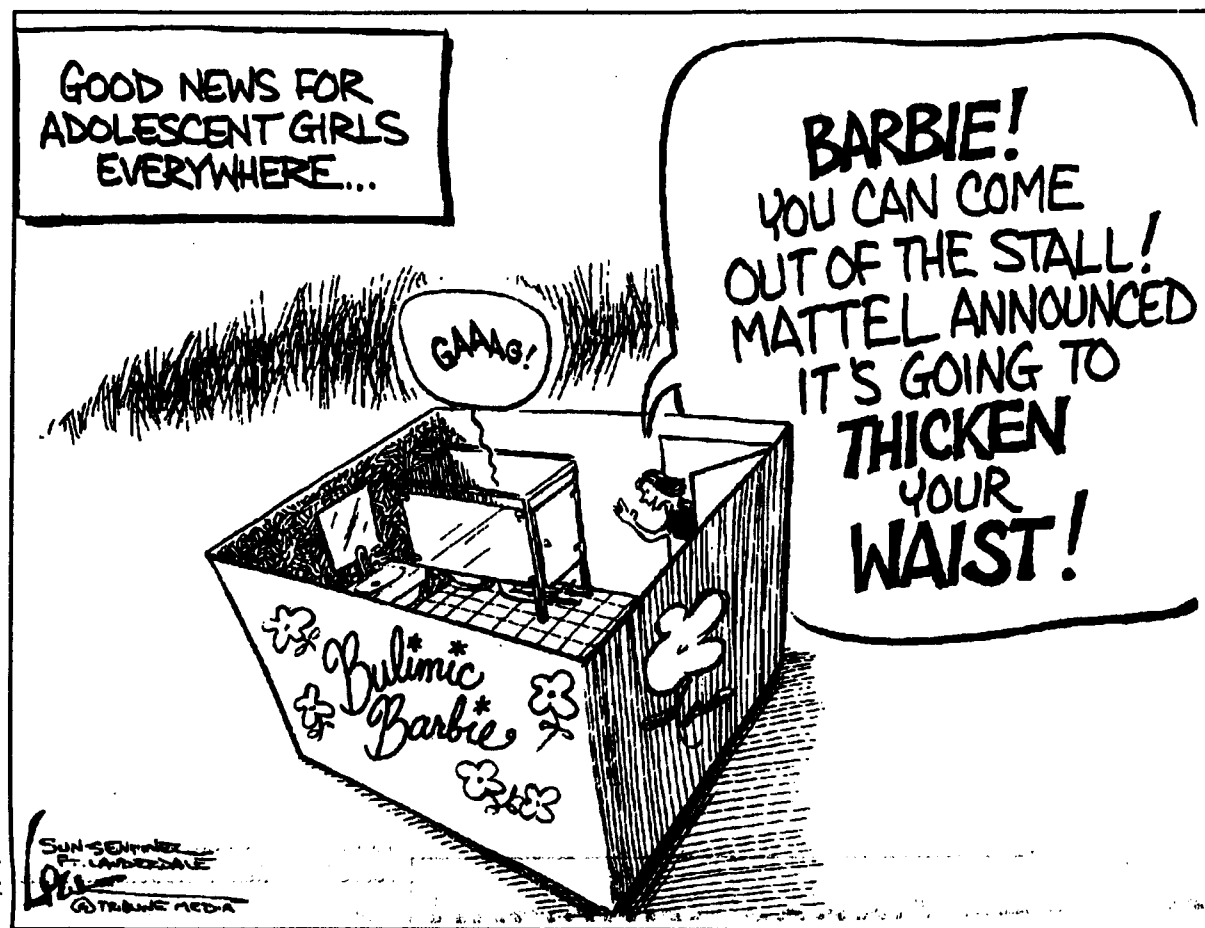
Not that Mattel hasn't tried to give their favorite trollop some positive jobs, but she just doesn't appear capable of carrying the roles. A protector seems slightly unreal somehow. Not that attractive women aren't smart or vice versa, but rather those implants might make it difficult to see where

you operate.

So in come the Mattel plastic surgeons for a makeover of our favorite doll. Barbie will get wider hips, a larger waist and a few letters whittled from her bra size. I would suggest freckles, feet suitable for flats and a pulsating glow-in-the-dark brain but I'm not holding my breath.

And no changes are planned for the material from which Barbie is made: sum up why Barbie is and always will be shaped to the contours of the least assertive features the market can stand and that's why she will probably always be popular.

Contributing Columnist Charles Powell is a political science graduate student.



**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

**EYE ON ERIE**  
**Erie online**

**Safer Sex Cabaret applauded**

To the Editor,

I would like to take this opportunity to commend Trigon and the Joint Residence Council, co-sponsors of this Tuesday's wholly successful "Safer Sex Cabaret." The program was remarkably informative as well as entertaining. To commemorate World AIDS Day in such a respectful and forthright fashion, given the ignorance that so often marks responses to this horrific plague, seems to me invaluable, and especially so in an educational context. Moreover, the integrity with which difference was lauded - in terms of sexual orientation as well as the cause of abstinence - made the evening profound for many who attended. It was a pleasure to witness such an open-minded presentation, and to feel as though my work here at Behrend as a teacher and a scholar is consistent with the college's educational mission as a social entity.

Sincerely,  
Alan Michael Parker  
Assistant Professor of English

**Student responds to Collegian cartoon**

Editor,

I found your comic the last Collegian, about an unfair playing field for minorities, very disturbing. I am sick and tired of hearing minorities complain about how bad off their lives are. Slavery ended a long time

ago, so GET OVER IT. If blacks spent more time working and trying to succeed in life, instead of dwelling about how the world is so biased, this world would be a better place. In my opinion, blacks and other minorities have life better off than whites. For instance, affirmative action helps minorities and women, but not caucasian males.

In an example that hits closer to home, at the Behrend College you will find a National Society for Black Engineers and a Society for Hispanic Engineers. One may ask, "Where is the National Society for Caucasian Engineers?" Well they don't have one because it would be "racist." This is a perfect example of why there are more and more racists in our world today.

Special treatment and reverse racism cause great anger and hatred to build up inside of an individual. I think you should look into the issue more before publishing such an untrue comic.

Seeking the truth,  
Jonathan Kolbe  
01 chemical engineering

**Child care center funding defended**

Dear Editors,

This letter is in response to the article, "Student activity fee going to Child Care Center," which appeared on the front page of the November 20, 1997 issue. The article described a \$20,000 allocation to the Child Care Center approved by Penn State-Behrend's 1996-97 Student Activity Fee Allocation Committee. The allocation has helped

cover a deficit accrued in the initial years of the Center's start-up. I would like to clarify several issues raised in this article.

First, the article implied that this allocation violated student activity fee guidelines. It did not. The guidelines specifically sanction funding support for child care at locations other than University Park. Quoting from those guidelines, "Selected support services may be funded. Some campuses lack basic services which are readily available at University Park. Consistent with the allocation process outlined (below), campuses may plan to use funds to enhance services where student need is evident. Those areas eligible for enhancement are athletics, career development and placement, child care services, health services issues and education, personal counseling, and student activities."

The activity fee allocation process is coordinated at each location by a committee of seven students representative of the student population, two staff, and one faculty member. These committee members are appointed jointly by the Student Government Association President and the Dean of Student Affairs. The process ensures that students have maximum, and majority, input into all of the decisions.

Penn State-Behrend's Student Activity Fee Committee invited campus-wide input last year into the activity fee allocation process. Written requests for suggested uses of activity fee funds were sent to all Behrend students, and two full-page Collegian ads were purchased to invite campus-wide input into the center allocation. While the article included a statement from SGA President Mike Zampetti in opposition to the child care allocation, a majority of all committee members,

most of whom were students, approved that decision.

The Child Care Center offers quality care for the children of students, faculty, and staff, enabling student parents to attend Penn State, and faculty and staff to work here without fear for their children's well being. While the center is now funding its direct operating costs through center income, a deficit was accrued in the initial years of the center's operation and was associated with very expensive start-up costs. The student activity fee allocation has helped reduce this deficit as an investment in the center's present and future ability to serve students.

While a relatively small number of students are served by the center at any given time, it is a critical service for those students who do need it. Over time, many students - primarily returning adults - will benefit from the presence of the center. In other words, the activity fee support now will help a growing number of students for many years to come. These students also pay the student activity fee.

If there are any questions about the center or the student activity fee, I would be happy to answer those. Thank you for this opportunity to explain the activity fee process and the rationale for supporting the Penn State-Behrend Child Care Center.

Sincerely,  
Chris Reber  
Dean of Student Affairs

by Anne Rajotte  
managing editor

Admittedly, Erie can be an unexciting city. Besides the mall, Tinsletown and the few weeks that are warm enough to enjoy Presque Isle, college students seem to have few options.

Erie is the third largest city in Pennsylvania, though it does not seem to match that title with the advantages of a city that ranks just behind Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. However, if you look hard enough, you can find that Erie might not be so bad after all.

There are numerous homepages dedicated to Erie's community, businesses, recreation and attractions. On www.accesserie.com, there are links to restaurant reviews, Presque Isle events, schedules for the Warner Theater and the Erie Civic Center, and homepages of organizations around Erie. You can find the Tinsletown schedule without having to go through the fifteen minutes of commercials that accompany the schedule on the phone.

The events at the Erie Civic Center, the Warner Theater and the Roadhouse Theater are not publicized a great deal on campus. Well known shows, bands and plays are at each of these places frequently, and often inexpensively. On the Erie homepages, there are also listings of concerts happening in Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Buffalo and State College. World Championship Wrestling is coming to the Civic Center, the Warner Theater is hosting Lord of the Dance, Stomp and the Nutcracker. The Roadhouse Theater is a small, nontraditional theater that, in addition to plays, presents

things like drag shows.

Presque Isle has been named one of America's top 100 swimming holes, along with Pymatuning Dam, which is only an hour south of Erie. Erie has its own opera theater and twenty seven golf courses. All of this seems to be obscured by the overdeveloped Peach Street strip of chain restaurants and shopping centers. Searching is definitely required if you are looking for something different in Erie.

One of the easiest ways to do this seems to be online. If you are interested exploring the spiritual life in Erie, there are links to several church's homepages, including an impressive site for the Erie Assembly of God. If you are looking for a nice evening out and want to forego the habitual visits to the Olive Garden, there are reviews, price listings and other general information about independent restaurants all over the Erie area.

The sites also include free classifieds, real estate and business listings and city maps. In short, everything one might want to know about Erie and its immediate surroundings

Because of Erie's size in comparison to Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, and lack of a concentrated downtown area, such as found in State College, it is harder to find a variety of things to do. Erie can be made at least a little more exciting if you know where to look. For more information on events and attractions around look for www.goerie.com; www.accesserie.com; or www.erie.net.

letters to the editor

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